

P 261630Z FEB 09
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2657
INFO HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
DEPT OF JUSTICE PRIORITY
CIA PRIORITY
DEA HQ WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
DHS WASHDC PRIORITY

S E C R E T CARACAS 000252

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/26/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [AMGT](#) [APER](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN DENIAL OF VISAS TO KEY MISSION PERSONNEL

¶1. (S) Venezuela's continued reluctance to issue visas to new personnel assigned to Caracas will, if not resolved, bring us to a mission critical situation. We are facing an almost complete turnover of the country team in summer 2009 with no certainty that their replacements will be granted visas on a timely basis to assume their new jobs. Four state section chiefs, two deputies, plus the LEGATT and DHS attache are scheduled to leave this summer. Despite repeated assurances from Foreign Ministry officials, including the Foreign Minister, that relations would be normalized and visa issuance made more flexible, the Foreign Ministry's Protocol Chief who controls visa issuance informed our Consul General on February 6 that the Ministry would not commit to issue visas to the remaining pending cases, which include our Defense Attache, MILGROUP Commander, and USAID representative. On February 20, several visas for more junior staff were issued but not the pending visas for Country Team members, highlighting the unpredictability of the process.

¶2. (S) If by late March we do not have a credible commitment by the GBRV to normalize visa issuance for personnel assigned to Caracas we should convey to them the potential consequences of continued harassment. This message - conveyed publicly through the media or by other means - needs to reach President Chavez, as he effectively controls dialogue with the United States. We should require an agreement memorialized by an exchange of notes ending administrative harassment of Embassy Caracas and that both sides will routinely issue visas to personnel filling positions in our respective missions in a timely fashion. Absent agreement or compliance with any agreement reached, we recommend withdrawing permission for Venezuela to maintain its seven consulates in the United States (we have only representation in Caracas and a part-time consular agent in Maracaibo).

CAULFIELD